

Robyn Schaapman

August 14, 2019 Interviewer Donna Coombs-Montrose, camera Don Bouzek

Q: Tell me about your union and your position in it.

RS: My position with my local, I'm an IBEW 424 member. I am the co-chair of the Sisters of 424 Committee, and I am the Build Together rep for IBEW 424.

Q: What is your job?

RS: I am a journeyed electrician and I work in the commercial sector of electrical – so construction, commercial work, mostly University of Alberta or shopping malls, LRT stations. Anything that's commercial property is work that we'd do.

Q: Tell me about your early life.

RS: I was born in Edmonton, Alberta in 1978 and I grew up here and have lived here my whole life. I have an older sister and younger brother. We grew up on the south side of Edmonton, and liked to play outdoors and get into all sorts of trouble.

Q: Are your parents also from Edmonton?

RS: My mom moved around a fair bit; she lived in Calgary and Ontario. My dad was born in the Netherlands and came to Canada and Edmonton when he was eight years old.

Q: How do your parents make a living?

RS: My dad worked at the University of Alberta at the Subatomic Centre for Nuclear Research for 40 years as a researcher, and my mom was a receptionist in the same building. That's how they met, and they worked together there for quite a long time. My mom took some maternity

leave for quite a few years, and eventually she did end up moving to work as a receptionist for different parts of the city of Edmonton as well. They're both retired now.

Q: Were you brought up in any specific cultural traditions?

RS: We definitely had some cultural influences. The Dutch side of my family always had dessert first, and lots of candies and stuff when we'd go visit the grandparents on that side. My Mom's side, which is a mix of a lot of things – English and German and we're not even sure all of them – we definitely had the Yorkshire pudding roast beef dinner Sundays thing where we'd meet up with the grandparents and all my cousins and aunts and uncles. My mom had 11 brothers and sisters, so a big family on that side.

Q: Did your family influence your work choice in any way?

RS: Was my work choice influenced by my family? Maybe a little bit. The first time I remember being interested in the trades, my dad used to have this workshop. We weren't allowed to go in there but I figured out that I could get in by using a broom or hockey stick to knock the hook lock off at the top of the door. Me and my brother would get in there and we'd make stuff out of whatever we could get our hands on. We'd build these little boats out of scrap wood and we'd use the drill even, and attach all the pieces together and glue pieces on, and take them out back and throw them in puddles in the alleyway. They wouldn't float, because they were too heavy, but we had so much fun doing that. Of course we got in trouble; we weren't supposed to be doing that. But that was my first recollection of being interested in a trade and building things. I do recall my dad building a little circuit on a board in that workshop, and just allowing us to touch the wire and have a little lightbulb turn on. I remember that being really exciting. So maybe a little bit of influence there from my dad and that sort of stuff.

Q: Tell me about your education before and after your apprenticeship.

RS: I really didn't have an interest in continuing school when I finished high school. I very much wanted to have a physical job. I wanted to be a letter carrier really badly; that was my

aspiration. I wanted to be out there walking around and getting exercise all day, and I just thought that would be the greatest career. I couldn't see any kind of schooling that I would need to go and fulfil that dream. I wasn't interested in sitting in a classroom; that just wasn't for me. I don't enjoy sitting, I need to be up and going. So I didn't take any school after high school until I joined the trades and started doing my apprenticeship at NAIT.

Q: Did you go directly from high school to the apprenticeship program?

RS: From high school I worked at a bunch of different jobs before I got to my apprenticeship. I was 12 years down the road from high school before I officially got into the trades. When I was in my last year of high school I took a work experience class where I could go work in a mechanic shop. I had a bit of an interest in that, and I wanted to know more about cars before I owned my own car and drove it. That experience discouraged me from pursuing a trade, honestly. It was really interesting, and there was a mechanic showing me stuff. I was learning to do basic maintenance like oil change, and I helped out with brakes and other little tasks, handed him tools, that sort of thing – little tasks, hand him tools sort of thing. When it was more complicated, I was just watching. But part way through that – it was a six-month work experience set up – apparently a customer saw me and asked why a little girl was in there working. I was small and looked very young; I probably didn't look like I was in high school. The owner was like, fair enough, you're not in the apprenticeship program, so you really shouldn't be working on cars, you should be just watching. I got really bored after that, so I didn't go a whole lot more. I ended up not learning too much more after that, once I couldn't be hands on and getting right in there and trying everything out. A couple years later [*the RAP program started*] [RS] in high school where people doing the same thing were apprentices, so it was allowed by law being in the trades. That's the difference. It was just the wrong year that I tried to do that.

Q: Did you find some other employment that led you to your choice in the trades?

RS: That was a long way down the road. At that time I was also working at McDonald's, and I worked there for a little while longer, and then I ended up working up in a juice plant. I was a

machine operator in a juice plant, and there were millwrights working there as well. I got to learn a lot from them about how to do my job, because you have to work in conjunction with a millwright to operate a machine. I worked on the labeler, so that was the machine that was putting the labels on the juice. Every time we did a different size, we had to adjust the entire machine and the whole setup and make sure everything was working properly. That whole job I was working with millwrights and learning. I had an interest in that and for a little while I thought I wanted to pursue that as well, but there just wasn't opportunities to move into that when I worked there.

Q: Then you took up your apprenticeship at NAIT?

RS: No, I was still pursuing my dream to become a letter carrier at that point. I was trying to figure out how to get my foot in the door there. I talked to a few people that I met through working with people at the juice plant about how to get my foot in the door. Back at that time, to be a letter carrier was a highly sought-after position at the post office. I was applying directly for those jobs when someone else finally told me, you need to start as Christmas help; that's the way to get your foot in the door. So I decided to do that and I took a little break from working at the juice plant, and I worked as Christmas help for one month at the post office.

Once I'd done that, I was able to apply for letter carrier when a position came open. For a little while I did both jobs – I worked all day as a letter carrier and then I'd go work at the juice plant in the evening as well. I was working very long days, probably 16 or 17 hours, trying to do both and get my foot in the door and get everything done. So I worked at the post office for seven years before I even had the idea of looking at the trades again. Even though I had a whole bunch of friends at the time who were in the trades, I never considered it as a job for myself at that point, until another friend who was a postie ended up quitting and had an epiphany that he wanted to be an electrician. He ended up taking the pre-apprenticeship program offered through our IBEW 424 training centre. He phoned me one day and was like, this is the greatest thing I've ever done. I love this, I'm learning so many new skills. There are benefits, there's pension, there's so many different things I can learn. He was so excited. I'm like, wow, I wish I could do that; that sounds great. I put down the phone and I was like, okay I'm going to look

into this now. I'd always had an interest in the trades, and I felt like that was the time to pursue it. I talked to two of my girlfriends who were already electricians, and for some reason they never made me think that I could do it. This other friend had the same education and skills that I had just working at the job I was at, and he was able to do it. So I'm, okay maybe I can do this too. So I decided to meet up with those two friends and ask them a little bit more about what they did, and learn a little bit more. The one friend happened to work for her dad's company, a small residential company, and they were able to let me come and job shadow on Saturday. They were working at a house nearby and he knew the owner and they were like, yea, just come see what we're doing for a couple of hours. I made the decision, yea I really like this. I helped them fish a wire in – a very minor thing that I did that day. I was like, yea I really like this and I want to learn more. It piqued my interest.

Q: So that's what you chose when you went to apprenticeship school?

RS: Yea. So then I tried to do the same thing as that friend did, to take the pre-apprenticeship course through the union. They only take 12 students for the three-month course, and it only happens a few times a year. The first time I applied, I didn't do enough research, and in the interview I stumbled a little bit when they asked me about what does a commercial electrician do. Which is really funny now, because that's what I do, that is my main job that I've been doing for ten years. I only spent one year doing industrial electrical. But they asked me, what's commercial electrical? I had no idea. I knew what residential was, because I'd job shadowed with one friend in residential. I knew what industrial was, because my other friends did industrial. But at that time, I didn't even know what that meant. That's the part I remember, not doing well in the interview. So I didn't make it in.

But as luck would have it, the friend that I job shadowed with became pregnant right after that. Her dad kind of said, well we don't really have a spot. You're having trouble now that you're pregnant, it's hard to do some of the things as your pregnancy progresses. He said she should find another job for the rest of it, which was really difficult, but she ended up working at a supplier. She was selling all the parts to all the different contractors coming in to buy everything they need. She just got to know them all as they came in, and she started asking around. She

knew I wanted to work for a union company. I wanted the benefits and pension to go along with that. She found the right contractor saying, you know, I can't get anybody through the job board at IBEW. It was so busy right then, there was a huge boom. Everybody was working industrial making lots of money, and nobody wanted to work for this small company in downtown Edmonton. So she convinced this guy he should hire me, and literally that's all it took. I talked to him on the phone. He asked me if I was comfortable going up a ladder to work, which I thought was a weird question, because I'm small and I'm like, I need ladders; I'm not going to be able to reach much without one. He just said, when do you want to start? Are you sure you'll go up the ladder? I'm like, yep I can do that. So he gave me my chance to get started. I knew very little at the time, and he gave me a chance to get my foot in the door and get started. Being able to start with a union company right away, it's quite difficult to do that.

Q: So it was a union company?

RS: It was a union company. They did put a job call on the board, and if it's not filled for two days, they can hire someone. You have to go down to the union hall and register as a permit; you're not an official member right away. But they let you take the job, because they need to fill the position, and then you can eventually become a member.

Q: So that's how the certification system works?

RS: Yea, once a company agrees to hire you, you have to go down to the Apprenticeship Board and register as an apprentice and get your blue book that's going to keep track of all your training and your schooling and everything before you complete your ticket.

Q: And the ticket will be a red seal?

RS: The ticket is your journeyman's ticket. [*The red seal is something separate for a compulsory trade.*] [RS] For electricians [*in Alberta*] [RS], the red seal is just a separate test that means you can work across the rest of Canada. [*For some trades that are not compulsory, it's just one test and you have your red seal.*] [RS]

Q: Tell me about your apprenticeship experience.

RS: The first company I worked for was a very small company. There were only six employees, and two of them were actually owners. It was a good experience to get started to do some smaller jobs and really have one-on-one time with a journeyman. That doesn't always happen right away, so I was quite fortunate.

Q: Did you have any difficulties with their expectations?

RS: For that first job, I worked there for six months. We were working in downtown Edmonton in high-rise [*buildings*] [RS]. It was kind of a great job because it was just a little intro into wiring, circuitry, lighting – just minor renovations, not any huge projects. I spent weeks just changing lightbulbs on one part of the job. When I finished they were like, oh we need to change the lenses now; I had to go back through the whole office floor and do that. All around me there's people just working in their little cubicles and getting stuff done. That's kind of different than a lot of what we do. Usually you have a complete jobsite where everything's separate, but this was like around the public. You need to interact with people and work around their work to fit a ladder in everywhere, so a different experience.

Q: Did anybody question you, being a woman doing that work?

RS: Nobody really questioned, but a couple of people thought maybe I was there just helping my dad. That was kind of funny. One guy tried to offer me a job in their plant where they were building panels and stuff. But they kind of want you to be further along in your apprenticeship before you do that kind of stuff. But it was kind of interesting. Most people were pretty encouraging and friendly. My struggles came as I moved along. After that job, I went to school to do my first two months of my apprenticeship through NAIT. After that, the economy kind of dropped off. There was less jobs, that company didn't have enough work, and they weren't able to take me back after I finished school. I ended up going back to the post office, because I hadn't quit, I actually just took education leave for four years. I thought, safety and security, I

have that to fall back on. It was an option to take a leave, and I was able to get approved for up to four years. I was like, well in four years I'll have my ticket, and at any time in between if I decided it's not for me, I still have my job at the post office. For two or three more months after that I went back to the post office and did my old job. Then I decided, well my apprenticeship is stalling a little bit. I need to start watching the board and look for jobs. A job in Shell Scotford came up. That's industrial work, very different from what I was doing before. But I thought, I'll try it out and see if I like it. I learned that is not what I like. The days are quite long. It's a ten-hour day – four tens, four days a week, ten-hour shifts. You take a bus out there, making it 13 hours, and that's just way too long for me. I was quite exhausted and it affected my asthma a lot. At that point my asthma was very well controlled; I wasn't even taking medication. I eventually had to leave that job because I was having so much trouble breathing.

Q: Was that Diversified transportation?

RS: Yea, Diversified would drive us out there. There's a bunch of bus stops, and you just go out there and they took you to the site. At the end of the day you wait for all the traffic, and the bus brings you back home.

Q: Tell me about the first day at Shell Scotford?

RS: First day obviously I was a little nervous. I had to get up really early because the bus came at 5:30 in the morning or something like that. You go through orientation for the first day. The whole day is training videos and learning about how to keep yourself safe onsite. You do a lot of paperwork, you have to show them your apprenticeship card and how many safety tickets you have at that point.

Q: Did you encounter any resistance to you being there?

RS: The first day I don't think I knew even what crew I was on. The second day they place you on a crew. The foreman was really friendly and encouraging, and everybody else was a little bit standoffish. I found out within the next couple of days that it was because something had gone



poorly with the last woman that was on their crew. But it didn't take long before they were kind of over that, and I was just another person, a part of the crew. They were all teaching me things. The foreman was really great. He pushed me to take every training course there was onsite. I got my lift ticket and harness training, and that presented some challenges because I'm quite small. They did not have a harness that was small enough for me at first. They went around and tried to get a universal harness. The trainer was fitting it on me and trying to tighten it up, and collecting all the extra straps. It didn't work, so the foreman ended up getting me one from a different company that was just for me. Everybody else would share a harness or whatever, but he got one that was smaller but was approved for work onsite, that I was actually able to fit. Most of the crew didn't have a lift ticket, so it was my job to drive them around to the place that we were going to do the work, and lift them up in the aerial work platform to the spot that we needed to work.

Q: So with the lift ticket, are you using a specific piece of equipment?

RS: Yea, like an aerial work platform is like a little cage on hydraulic scissors with wheels at the bottom. You can drive it around to wherever you've got to work, and then you move the controls to get you up to the area you need to be. There are different kinds. There are some that also boom outwards as well, so it's a little basket on an extension piece so you can shift into different places.

Q: So you had an advantage, with that ticket. Did that cause any problems?

RS: Just at first. It's quite common to have that ticket if you're working in that environment, and now most calls require that you get the ticket before you even start the job. At the time, just nobody else happened to have had a valid ticket at that point. Plenty of them actually had previously had tickets, but they hadn't renewed them. They had the experience, so they were able to be in the basket with me, teaching me on the job – this is the trick of how you get in there, and just at what point to stop and stuff like that. But their ticket wasn't valid, so I had to drive and do that part of it. It was a great learning experience to make sure that I got to be

involved in what we were doing, even though I was still a first year apprentice. You're just learning, at that point.

Q: Where did you go for your apprenticeship after that?

RS: I spent about a year there, so I became a second year on that job, then I went to school for two more months. Then my lungs kind of said, no that's not for me, and it was too long a day. So I ended up getting a layoff. It was near the end of the job anyway, so they were manning down and I just said, I need to go. That same friend who got me interested in the apprenticeship had been working for a different commercial company, and they were starting to man up for jobs at the University of Alberta. They ended up putting in a call for a second year apprentice, and I took the call. I went to work building labs there, so I had to learn completely different things – running conduit, bending conduit, pulling wire, wiring up transformers that we'd have to mount next to stuff that helped with HVAC system, moving air in and out of the laboratories, that kind of stuff. Completely different work from what I'd done previously in commercial work. A totally new environment. It was a completely dedicated construction site. The entire building was being built when I was there. There were different people on each floor, and our company was doing the controls for all the thermostats and any of the temperature change items intertwined with the HVAC system.

Q: What's the difference between commercial and industrial?

RS: Commercial is businesses, basically. Residential is houses, industrial is plants. Shell Scotford is an [*industrial plant*] [RS].

Q: Are there more safety issues attached to industrial?

RS: Absolutely. There's always more danger working on a plant. The part I was working in was not an active plant, which is slightly safer, and rules are a little bit less strict on that part. When you're into a live plant, everything's functioning around you. The plant is just being built and you're putting in the tanks, putting in the pipelines. We're applying heat trace to the pipes to

make sure that they don't freeze in the winter. But there's nothing going through the pipe yet when the plant's not functioning, so you don't have to worry about a pipe breaking and something coming out of it at that point. So there's less danger that way. In a live plant you have to worry about gases being released and accidentally breathing them in, or more flammable things being around. It is a slightly different environment.

Q: Have you worked in live plants?

RS: On that job we did go into the live side a few times, but we weren't there all the time. I never worked up in Fort McMurray or anything, I've always worked out of Edmonton.

Q: What was the experience like, getting your certificate?

RS: The experience of getting my actual certificate? That's a really exciting point in your trades career, because you get a really big raise and you get a lot more responsibility. Conflicting things going on there – it's a bit more stressful, but you're finally making the money you've been working towards. That's really when you start learning, to be honest. When you're doing your apprenticeship, you're learning and building towards that ticket, but once you have your ticket is when you really start learning how the trade functions. That's when you can really get in there and you're allowed to work on more things that are live, you're allowed to do more things. There's less restrictions on the work you're doing, and you're the one planning what you're doing a little bit more. You have apprentices that are going to help you complete your tasks, so it's a different side of the coin all of a sudden. When everything's your responsibility, that's when you really learn about how things work.

Q: What kind of restrictions are you referring to?

RS: The restrictions as an apprentice are mostly safety. The thought behind it is you're just learning and they need you to be protected a little bit when you're just learning. It's dangerous work, being an electrician. You don't want a brand new apprentice on a live panel where they can be electrocuted. There's a certain point where you're suddenly allowed to do that kind of

stuff, and before that you're just the person standing next to your journeyman in case something happens to them. You're kind of their safety watch.

Q: What jobs have you had as a journeyman?

RS: Since I got my ticket, one of the best things is when I was a fourth-year apprentice my general foreman decided I was going to go to this new job and start it on my own. That helped me grow so much, because everything was suddenly my responsibility. The beginning of the job was quite simple. I had to take out all the lighting so they could dismantle the entire floor before we started the new renovations. I was there as the only electrician. There were plumbers on site and there was the general contractor. I was in there turning off the circuit, taking the light out, taking everything down to make it safe for the people who were removing ceiling, removing walls, and there was an asbestos removal as well going on.

Q: Where was this?

RS: It was at the University of Alberta in the Medical Sciences Building. It was a huge renovation job; we were there over a year. As the job progressed, once the demolition finished we started rebuilding things. I had the opportunity to learn fire alarm systems from one of the best fire alarm systems technicians at the University of Alberta. He'd been there for over 40 years and knew the ins and outs of every building in the whole University of Alberta. I had to work with him throughout the year to disconnect the old system and then start planning and building a whole new system, and tying it in and doing the testing and verifying. The best part about that was I had the opportunity to study with him and learn the whole year. That opportunity doesn't arise often. Often you're just on your own or you're figuring it out with a journeyman and you're learning that way, but I was learning right from the fire alarm technician. I learned all of the things that they specifically want to see when we're coming in and working on our jobsite, so that's helped me ever since. Any time we do a job at the University, we're dealing with the same group of people. They know that I worked under him and they know the quality of work that I do and what I've learned, and it just makes everything go really smooth. So that was a great advantage that I lucked upon right at the right time.

Q: So you feel very proud about that work.

RS: Fire alarm work is very challenging, because that's people's life safety in your hands. You want to make sure that people are able to get out when there's a problem. At the University, you can't leave if there's any kind of trouble in the system which indicates a wire is loose or a device isn't functioning properly. So there's that extra stress to it, and for some reason, that motivates me. I really enjoy that part of it. It's got to be right, it's got to be a specific way, or it's not going to pass all the tests at the end of the job. I really like the challenge of that, of making sure everything is right and working properly, and getting that check mark that you've completed the job properly. That extra responsibility feels a little bit good. It's also helped keep me employed. When we have a big job and there's a lot of complex fire alarm, my boss is like, I want you to be there for this. So it's able to keep me working.

Q: Is there a raise in pay for that?

RS: No, I get the same pay as everybody else, which is fine. That's what being in a union is about – we get the same pay as the person working next to us. Everybody has different things that they're really good at, so that's why you need a crew of people. Some of the bigger stuff I haven't had the opportunity to do, like some of the bigger distribution work and stuff like that. I may be a little bit small to be doing some of it. I'm sure I'd find a way, but it's great to know that there's other people who've been doing that for years and they specialize in making that perfect and right.

Q: So there's no pay discrimination?

RS: With the union, there's a rate for the level that you're at. If you can prove with your blue book that you're at that level, you should be getting that pay.

Q: Are you aware of any cases where that's not the case?

RS: Well there's rules to how things should be, but companies can choose to pay you more. They can choose to pay someone foreman rate when they don't have journeyed electricians working underneath them. There's a certain amount where they have to be bumped up in pay. If you're supervising five journeymen, then you should be getting the foreman rate. If you're supervising three or less, you can possibly get sub-foreman rate. But a company can also choose, like say you're just at a job for a few months where there's only three people that you're directing, then they can choose to keep you at foreman rate if they want to. In that way, there can be differences in what people get paid. As long as it's above a certain level, then it's at the owner's discretion what they want to do.

Q: How has having the ticket impacted you economically?

RS: At first it was great. I paid down a fair bit of debt from going to school, because you spend two months where you're just making employment insurance while you're going to school. So I was able to pay off that debt, which was great. More recently though, we have taken a big wage rollback, so I'm basically making what used to be fourth year rate right now. That is definitely a little bit of a struggle for IBEW electricians in Alberta right now. That's just the commercial rate that got dropped. Industrial rate has stayed the same the whole time.

Q: What is the cause of that?

RS: The economy, basically. There's a lot less oil production happening in the last three or four years, and there's been a lot less jobs for electricians. There are probably 10,000 more electricians in Alberta than there are jobs, so there is less of a demand for us; so it's easier to drop our wage and pay us a little bit less right now.

Q: How are the jobs managed, as to order of leaving.

RS: When you're on the job, who's leaving first? That really depends on the job. Sometimes with commercial there's another job that the company is picking up in the meantime. Right now we're kind of winding down our job at the LRT and we're picking up more work back at the

University, so we've started to shift people over. It just depends on who's slated to do what particular kind of work.

Q: So you've been able to stay employed?

RS: I definitely have had a couple of long unemployment stints in the past three years since things have been slower. We just weren't winning any of the bids at the University, where our primary work is done for our particular crew. The first time it came around my boss was really stressing. Our general foreman was saying, we're not winning these jobs that we usually win; people are coming in and bidding way below what we would ever bid, below material cost. That started happening when work started drying up up north. Companies that were primarily doing industrial were just trying to get their foot in the door with commercial work, so they were bidding extremely low just to get their foot in the door and get started doing these jobs. We couldn't compete. We didn't want to [*buy a job*] [RS], where you're having to pay above costs. A lot of times when companies do that they end up going under, because they're not making any money. It's definitely happened throughout my apprenticeship where I've seen, our company used to do all the Safeways and another company underbid by so much. Then the store is open and the electrical isn't finished. At some point the company goes under and then they're saying, who wants to work overtime eight hours after work to go finish this job and straighten out everything. Sometimes you'll weed out companies that are just doing that and underbidding you by a lot. This time, that didn't work to our advantage. We didn't have any jobs for quite a long time. We went down to one job. I volunteered to take a layoff because I didn't have a family to support. We were down to the base crew that has been with our general foreman for a long time. Anybody he was able to get shifted to another crew in the company that had more work, he tried to move them around. I just said, when you get to the point where you don't have any spots, I'll be fine, I'll take a little break. I honestly thought it would be a couple months, no big deal, but it ended up being eight months before we had enough work for me to go back. They got a big job where they needed lots of fire alarm done, so they said, we need Robyn to do this job, and I was able to go back to work.

Q: So you specialize?

RS: A little bit specialized. Other people could've done it, but he had confidence in my abilities to make sure it's done right and make sure we can meet the deadlines. That job had extremely tight deadlines, and the complexity of it, they want somebody who has experience with that sort of thing.

Q: You have people's lives in your hands?

RS: Yea, and also if you make an error and you accidentally set off the system, if you cause an alarm state to be going on in the building, if there's different floors that are just regular offices or in that case it was a hospital building, then the whole building needs to be emptied. That's very costly. Everybody's got to stop working and exit the building. The fire department has to come up and confirm there wasn't a fire, someone made a mistake. A company doesn't want to risk that, because it gets very expensive, and people complain when they're constantly being forced out. Especially in a hospital situation where you can't just move patients just because the fire alarm is going off, they have to remove people sideways into another department or something like that. So you want to make sure you're not just doing it accidentally all the time, and make sure you're keeping certain parts disconnected until it's safe to have them hooked up to the main system.

Q: It's a very complicated responsibility.

RS: It can be; it depends on the system and what else is going on. In a mall, maybe things are more disconnected and it's not a big deal, or there's someone overseeing everything and doesn't immediately call the fire department. So there are different places where it's not as critical as it would be if you're in a hospital or any university building where you're emptying a bunch of school classes. Or people working in a laboratory with dangerous things where they don't want to leave randomly in the middle of their experiment, as it could risk something they've been working on for a year.

Q: Is there any special fire alarm technician certification you can get?



RS: There is, there's an extra ticket you can get. There's different training programs based on the different brands of fire alarm systems as well. You can get specific training from each specific company for that system in how their stuff works. I believe there's week-long courses you can take as well.

Q: Are you active in the union?

RS: I am. I'm the co-chair of the Sisters Committee right now, so that means I'm very involved. We used to have meetings every month, and now we're doing it every second month, because it was starting to be a lot. But we do a lot of volunteer projects. Most of it is just an opportunity for our community to get together. We did a few volunteer projects where we installed lighting for a festival. That was kind of our first little project where we were getting to know each other and just out having fun doing some electrical work. We've since had a couple of days where we volunteered at Habitat for Humanity, not necessarily doing electrical work, but it's nice to go out and help people out. One day we actually got to work with somebody who was going to live in a Habitat home eventually, so that was a particularly special day to see who it was going to benefit, the work that we were doing. We also do a lot of work with junior high and high school students, teaching them the basics of the trades. We've done a couple of different projects where we teach them how to make an extension cord, show them how to wire it all up and how to check that it's right, and how to do everything safely. More recently in the past couple years we've been doing a day camp where we teach junior high students how to build a robot lamp. They get to learn all about wiring a light, wiring a switch, wiring an outlet, and the extension cord of that turns everything on in the end. They get to learn every bit of basic circuitry just with that one project, and then they get to take it home after. It's a really cool thing for them to have. The other cool part about that is often the kids in the camp are daughters of our union brothers and sisters. It kind of builds your community a little bit there to get to know their families and teach them skills as well. That's something I really enjoy, it's passing on the trade skills to the next generation and try and get them interested in trades, and thinking about it and what they want to do when they grow up.

Q: It sounds like the vision of the organization is alive and well in your hands.

RS: Oh yea, it's wonderful. And the Sisters Committee for IBEW is so great. There are so many people that are involved in pitching in and planning and putting a whole project together. We really work as a group and just make it happen, outside of doing our regular jobs too. We take the day off work without pay to go and help out. The training centre provides the materials and we usually get sponsors, so we work in conjunction with them and everybody pitches in, and we get to teach these kids great stuff.

Q: Have you met other tradeswomen who are not in Build Together yet?

RS: Yes, lots of times we do. Because on commercial sites there's usually a controls company and a basic circuitry electrical company, there's often other electricians too on that site, so sisters from that as well. Lots of plumbers out when I did industrial as well. There was glaziers on a job last year, and there were several women working for that company cutting the glass and installing it. That was pretty cool to see. That's the first job where we've had glaziers on the job, so it was neat to meet them.

Q: Are some of them in Build Together?

RS: They're not part of the building trades; that particular company wasn't part of a unionized building trade, so they can't join, unfortunately.

Q: So 100 percent of your membership would be women in the building trades?

RS: For Build Together? Yes, Build Together has to be all affiliates of the building trades. Even when I was first starting and I didn't know the difference, my cousin is IBEW 1007. She works for the City of Edmonton as an electrician. That part of IBEW isn't a building trade; they're considered maintenance. So she wasn't an affiliate and she wasn't able to join.

Q: Does the union recognize your achievements?

RS: Yea, they have recognized me a few times. I've actually won three awards in the last couple of years. Every single one of them, I've had people from our union nominate me or help me write a statement or just support me in being nominated for the award or accepting the award. So that has been really great. We do have a magazine put on by the international IBEW, and they did feature one of my awards in there as well. That was kind of cool to see that I'm in the newspaper that everybody gets, for all the hard work I've done. Some of it is for volunteer work. A really special one that I won last year was the ACTIMS Award. Delanee and I both won that one together; I don't know if she talked about that in her interview. That was extremely special, because we were vying for the same award, and we were both nervous when we found out we won to tell the other one, because we thought it meant the other one didn't win. We both wanted each other to win, so it was pretty cool. Oh did you hear who won? We were both like, I won, oh we won together. So we got to go and collect our awards together for that one, which was really cool. That one's about your skills as well, so you're getting your foreman to write about your abilities, about your integrity, about your safety record and your leadership skills. So that one is particularly special.

Q: Do you have a good relationship with your foreman? Does he give you recognition for a job well done?

RS: For the most part. My general foreman is pretty quiet, so doesn't usually tell you you've done a good job. If he's choosing you to do another project, then you know you've done a good job. The first time I completed something, he gave me a slap on the back like, you made it, you did it, you survived the long day and everything worked at the end of the day. That was really good. My immediate foreman, she's amazing. I know she has a lot of confidence in me and she has taught me so much over the years. I definitely have a great relationship with her. I hope you interview her too for this project. She's been a mentor of mine since I was a second year apprentice. I met her while I worked for a different company on the same site at the University. I was working for the controls company and she was a foreman doing other electrical. She came up to talk to the journeyman electrician I was working with and I thought, oh that's really cool. She was in charge of probably 50 people at that point, running quite a big job on multiple floors

of that building. That was kind of inspiring to me. Over the next couple of months I got to run into her a little more and get to know her. After I came back from school there wasn't a lot of work with that company, so I just kept my eye on the job board, and a call came up for her crew at the same site. So I went for it, and I've worked with her on and off ever since. Probably the best decision I ever made was taking a shot at that job. It's really great to have someone who just wants to teach you things. She's been around a long time, and she knows a lot. She's willing to help you learn and help you grow, and push you to do more things. So it's great to improve your skills.

Q: Have you experienced any health and safety issues on the job?

RS: Definitely. There's so many ways that your safety is in jeopardy. You always have to be conscious of what you're doing, and making a plan. Usually we start every day by filling out a safety card. You put down what the task is you're going to be doing and the steps to accomplish it, and you go through a list of different hazards that could be present. Before you work on things you're supposed to turn off the power and test that it's off. All those steps have to be taken. There are procedures for each thing. For each job, you have to know what the specific procedures are. It's different in different places for what they want you to do. Different places could have electrical energized from two different sources, and you need to be aware of that. Where we're working right now at the LRT, there's backup generators. Even if you turn off the main power, you have to make sure that if they come to test the backup power that it's not going to turn on whatever you're working on. You have to make sure everything's followed. So many other people have access to the electrical rooms, you have to make sure there's no way other people can turn on the power while you have something you're working on. There's also the safety aspect of if your site is closed or if the general public can get in where you're working. Right now I'm working in an LRT station that's open, so there's people coming and going trying to get to work, and we're working in the middle of it. We're making it difficult for them to get to their job downtown, and we have to make sure to do all of our safety procedures to make sure people just trying to get by don't get injured and that they don't inadvertently injure us in the meantime. Then there's also the risk of a train that's moving and coming and going at whatever time it needs to. There's also the high voltage line that runs the train that's right near by us, so

we have to make sure that we're not contacting that. That's a completely exposed 600 volt line right next to where you're working. You're on a metal scaffold, so you have to make sure your scaffold doesn't run into that line or tip off the platform or any of those things.

Q: Have you received any additional training for that specific job?

RS: There is special training called TPOC training, and there was a certain number of people on our crew that had taken that training. I was not one of the people. Our foreman took it and we had a fourth-year apprentice that took it as well, and I think maybe our general foreman took it as well. I think there was three people that took it. They planned it so there would be a person on each shift. For a while we had to work around the clock to get a particular station done, and there's certain areas of the station where you need a person with that training to be present if you're working there. If you're near that 600 volt line that runs the trains, you're within a metre, you need to have one of those people there. There's certain areas that are kind of, they're not public areas, they're kind of the maintenance areas behind the station and stuff like that – you need to have one of them present.

Q: So if you need to go to that area, you need to make sure there's someone present with the required training?

RS: If I'm going to work in there. Sometimes you have to move through there, and that's fine. But if you're going to be there with ladders and wires and stuff, you have to make sure that there's someone who's aware of what each part of the LRT does. There's that 600 volt line and then there's other wires that put the voltage on that line as well, called messenger wires. If you don't know what all those different individual parts are, you shouldn't be working there. I didn't take the actual course but I did get to read a training manual just so I was more aware of what we were getting into.

Q: So there's a percentage of the crew that's required to have the training?

RS: Yes.

Q: Is there any other training that may interest you in the future?

RS: Absolutely, any time there's a training opportunity, I'd be interested in learning new and different things. That's the best part about electrical, is there's always something new to learn. You could work in it for 50 years, there's always going to be a new innovation or a different thing or a different aspect you could get into and learn about.

Q: No barriers are placed on you?

RS: Sometimes it's just the timing, like who's available or the class is limited. I think that's why it was only three people that went. It wasn't that I was prevented from taking it. It was like, this class has only room for three people from your crew, and then there are people who are doing other parts of the job who need to be in it as well. There were people building the ceiling and the tiling and all that kind of stuff – they need to have a few people in there. The general contractor needed to have some of their carpenters in it as well, and there's only space for so many people. So it was just figured out who was available that day, who does it makes sense to have, who's going to be on what shift, and then kind of work it out that way. It's just a decision made at the time; maybe I was busy doing something else. It was also a great opportunity for our fourth year apprentice – that was probably the first special course she got to take. It was an opportunity for her to do something new and learn something else and have that on her resume for the rest of her career. I don't feel like I missed out on anything by not getting that particular one. There's going to be different opportunities for different members of the crew, depending on where we go.

Q: Would you encourage people to participate in health and safety training?

RS: Absolutely. I encourage anybody if you have a spare weekend, to look up what courses are available. That's one of the great things about being part of IBEW, is we have a great training centre. If you're a member and you have enough hours, you're able to go and take any course for free. There's a huge variety going on. There are different ones on the weekend, there are

some during the week. If you happen to have a couple months when you're not working, you can look up what's available and sign up as long as there's space. There are so many different things you can learn. That's part of being union, that's part of what your dues pay for. It's definitely a wonderful addition that isn't available elsewhere.

Q: Are you aware of any workplace issues that were reported to OH&S?

RS: I don't know if there were any issues that were ever reported. Definitely things occur and you usually have to deal with a health and safety issue right away. There are different rules when we're down on the platform of the LRT. You need to have a danger tape barrier with pylons around us to make sure that the public doesn't walk into where we're working. We have our area with our materials and our ladders or our work platform separated. There are rules like we can't take that down until all of our stuff inside is out of it or it's disassembled. If we built a work platform, it has to be completely disassembled and removed before we take down that safety barrier. We did run into where an apprentice didn't understand that, and took it down too soon. That was a big safety issue and he had to be moved to a different site where that wouldn't be an issue, where we don't have to do that kind of barrier.

Q: Did anybody get hurt?

RS: Nobody got hurt, but it's just a very strict rule about working in that area that we have to adhere to to be part of that job. Even something that seems so minor, but just because the average person doesn't even know what that red barrier means often, we need to have people that are not even working on electrical work that are just standing there to make sure that nobody comes in. People are used to walking around there getting to work, and if you're in their line of travel they might not even see you; they're looking at their phone, they're listening to music. So we constantly have to be aware and communicating with the public and telling them which way to go to get around us. Even watching our other co-workers, if you're moving something that's a little bit bigger, make sure they're not reaching out of the barrier, or they're aware that a person is passing. If we're removing old lighting, which is mostly what this job is, a lot of it's full of old dust and stuff. Sometimes we can't make the barrier far enough away to

keep that dust from potentially falling on a person. Often we have to be like, the person on the ground has to let you know if there's people coming up, and you have to stop what you're doing and just make sure that dust isn't even going to fall at that point. You just wait for the people to get through where they need to go, and then you continue to work. This job is taking way more employees just because of that, because you have to be conscious of other people's safety in the area. And just our safety, just making sure we're keeping each other safe.

Q: How long now have you been an electrician?

RS: I've been an electrician for 11 years now.

Q: And that includes the apprenticeship?

RS: That includes the apprenticeship. Day one was July 14, so I just passed that milestone of 11 years now. The cool thing about that is the past four years I've been helping with the day camp where we teach the junior high students, and that usually falls right around my anniversary day. It's kind of like a celebration of it being another year, and I get to take the day off and teach kids what I've learned, and encourage them to follow down the same path. It's something I celebrate every year.

Q: This has been a highlight of your life.

RS: It is a bit of a highlight. Also, sometimes you can't get your raise until you pass that anniversary date, so a lot of people keep track of that as the date they can complete their next level of apprenticeship to get their [raise] [RS].

Q: As a journeyman, what is your next step up?

RS: My next step is I could get my Masters certificate, which means I could pull permits or have my own business. I'm not ready to do that yet. That's a lot of studying and it's a very long test, a six-hour test. I just don't have the time. I'm doing so much other stuff right now that it's not



really in the works for me. I'm really enjoying working with Build Together and inspiring other people to join the trade, and helping others who are already here. I don't think I really want to do anything that intensive. It's quite a lot of schooling. Some people just go write the six-hour test, but you're less likely to pass. It's probably better if you take either the two-month course or you can also go at night two nights a week for a couple of months and just prepare yourself. You're learning the code book and all the little intricacies of the code to pass that test, so it's a quite a special one.

Q: Is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't asked?

RS: I don't know right now. Maybe a little break, and then we can do the other questions that Don has.

Q: What's the process of getting a job?

RS: I talked before about how I got my first job, which was a little bit unconventional. Normally when you're part of the union you can look online every day, depending on the union. Our union has an online job board, so you go to IBEW 424 website and every day it will list all the jobs that are going to be available for bidding the next day. Each job will have qualifications that you need. You need to be a certain level of apprentice or journeyed electrician, or there are jobs for welders sometimes or linesmen. We cover a few different things. First you got to look at, okay am I a second year apprentice, if the job says that. Then there will be different kinds of jobs. There's industrial work, there'll be commercial work, there'll be solar jobs as well. We don't have too much residential yet; I don't know if I've seen a call for that, but we're getting into that a little bit. So you need to know if you have the experience for that job. Underneath will say the shift that it is. My job that I currently work is five eights, so five days a week eight hours a day. There's often four days a week ten hour shifts or there could be a job up in Fort McMurray that could be as much as 24 and four – 24 days working there, four days off. Or sometimes there's seven days there and seven days back or 14 days there and seven days back. So you want to look at all those things before you decide if you want the job. Then you're looking at the company name as well. Often it'll tell you the specific site where it'll be, so the

location wherever in Alberta the job will be. Then there's also the qualifications. Often a job like I'm doing, you'll need to have your lift training and your harness training to be able to go on a lift. You'll need your construction safety certificate. You'll likely need a conduit bending course to know how to bend conduit. Sometimes they can even request that you also have experience bending and installing conduit. That means you have worked in a job previously and you've done that work already. They can have different safety qualifications that they want you to have. Often they will ask for WHMIS, which is material safety training so you know what substances you're dealing with and that kind of stuff. Sometimes you need H2S training for industrial sites. There are many different qualifications. Usually you look through and you go, okay I have all these, this is a job I'm interested in, it's the hours I want to work. There will even sometimes be different pay schedules listed, depending on the kind of job or which part of the collective agreement it's based under. You might want to look that up if it's not listed, and see if that's what you want. Once you've decided it's a job you're interested in, the next morning between 8 and 9:30 a.m. you need to phone the hall or be at the hall and say, this is my name and I'm interested in that job. Once they have collected all the people who are interested in that hour and a half, they will look at your out-of-work number. Your out-of-work number indicates how long you've not been working. The first person who had no job is the first person that's going to go back to work and get the next job. A lower number means you're more likely to get that job. If I haven't worked for two years and my number is two years old, I should get that job ahead of someone who just hasn't been working for a month, as long as I have all those qualifications for the job. They can say, do you have this ticket, do you have that ticket, before they accept it. That's kind of how it works. Once they've sorted through that process, they'll call you back two or three hours later after they've gone through all the jobs and figured out which person had the lowest number that was interested in which jobs, and the right qualifications and skills. They'll call you up and say, okay you were successful at this job, so you need to come in and pick up your dispatch slip. So you go down to the hall and make sure your dues are current. If you haven't been working for a month or two, you might have to pay up a little bit. When you're not working, they do give you a lower rate; you can pay out-of-work dues. So you usually have to pay up your full dues for the month that you're going to work, and get your receipt from that, and go pick up your dispatch slip. That's going to show who you have to call to report to work, and the company and everything like that. So you pick that up and you call

whoever is going to be your foreman the next day. Something I like to do, I don't know if everybody does, if it's in town I like to go that day after I've got my dispatch slip, if the foreman's willing to meet me, and just drop off my tools so they're there the next day and I'm ready to go. I just find that easier, especially with places like at the university where you can't usually park next to where you're working. It's nice not to have to haul your toolbox in the first day. It's nice to take it the day before and kind of see the site, see where you're going to, and that kind of stuff. On my very first job, I didn't take my tools down before, but I did go and meet the owner and see where I was going to be meeting him the next day, which was really nice. Obviously you can't do that if it's an industrial job and your bussing up or flying up, so just go the day of first thing in the morning. You usually have to do a site orientation as well, so sometimes you start the very next day and sometimes it's site orientations for this job are only Wednesdays, so you maybe have to wait until the next Wednesday or the next time when the flight is going up to the job. It's dependent on the job.

Q: Are the foremen also members of the union?

RS: They are, yes. There's a certain point in supervision where you're not necessarily part of the union anymore. That's quite different from working at the post office, where immediately the supervisor is in a different union, completely separate.

Q: Are your foremen in the same union?

RS: For commercial work where I am, my foreman is the same as me, she's an IBEW member. She's part of the Sisters Committee, as well. The superintendent is also part of our union. I don't know exactly at what point, maybe it depends if you're directly working for that company when it becomes different. There are some situations where people have been a superintendent, and then they are working directly for Suncor or something like that, and it becomes a point where they need to leave the bargaining unit. That's not something I've really encountered in my job too much, it's not something I've had to worry about. Obviously, owners of our companies are not part of the union, they're going to be separate. But they may have previously been, and done their apprenticeship all through the union as well. The first company I worked for, that was

the case. They were IBEW members, and as the owners decided to retire, there was four people from our local that got together and bought the company from him. They were definitely wanting to be part of the union, even though they were small and they were owners, but they're definitely separated, and they didn't know the ins and outs of things, because it had been quite a while since they'd been part of it.

Q: How common is it for women to be foremen?

RS: I know quite a few of the sisters in our local have been foremen. It depends what job you're on. This job, you've applied for the foreman position, and you go up to work two or three months, and then maybe you're laid off for a little while, and then the next job you take you're back on the tools again. Industrial can change within a matter of months. But they often know who has been a foreman before when they get there. I saw that a little bit when I was there. A guy just took a regular call, showed up to site, and people said, oh he used to be a general foreman on another job. Right away they started pressuring him to run a different crew. I saw that throughout the job. I didn't stay with the same people. The foreman that I started with became a general foreman, and then our crew split up, and a bunch of different journeyed electricians shifted out and started having the first foreman job, and I went with one of them at the beginning to help him out, and we got a whole bunch of new people on the job, and you start a new crew and start working away. That changes as the job starts manning down, too. People will start being laid off or shifted out. Travelers usually go home first, if they've come from another province to work in Alberta. Usually travelers go home first before the locals. They're eager to get back to their homes; they're coming just for some work. You'll see that, and then the foreman will be stepping down and going back on the tools for a little bit until the job ends. With our stuff, the commercial work, it really depends on the job. My foreman needs to have five journeymen that she's directing before she'll get foreman pay. In this job she is planning and organizing everything, but there isn't that many journeymen so she's probably getting sub-foreman pay. Then it depends. We might go to a much bigger job where once there's more, then she'll get the raise. It just depends on what's happening.

Q: Is the pension and benefits package run through the union, or does the employer contribute, or how does it work?

RS: Each union hall probably is different in the trades. I know for IBEW we have our own industry benefit fund. They're right on site in our union hall, and we can go and talk to them and ask questions about is this going to be covered, is that going to be covered. They're local, they're right there in our union hall.

Q: Is a lot of electrical work being done non-union these days?

RS: Absolutely. There's a huge difference in the amount of market share that we used to have for the electrical work. I know before the '80s we had a much bigger market share; now we're around 20 percent. We have a very small amount of the market. Part of that was because when oil was booming we were going after those big industrial jobs, trying to man those up and prove that we had enough employees to cover those big jobs and get those higher wages for those big jobs. The commercial sector really wasn't sought after at that point. There wasn't as much money to be made, so we didn't continue to hold the market share in that. Now we're at the point where, oh no, there's not as much industrial work to do, and we're trying to regain that commercial market share and expand that way and put our people back to work.

Q: You talked about doing a risk assessment at the start of the day. Does that happen on non-union worksites as well?

RS: Most sites I would say still have to do a risk assessment at the start of the day. In commercial, there isn't a union site and a non-union site. The site I'm working on right now, the general contractor is a non-union contractor. Different companies have won a bid on the job as well, so the electrical contractors are union, because that's my company, and the elevator mechanics are union as well; they're Elevator Constructors 122. Then there's also all the carpenters and labourers and scaffolders that are non-union. We're all mixed together and we all get along and it's not a big deal. That's quite common in commercial, where there'll be some of each and we just all work together and it's not a big deal. We definitely have that

conversation sometimes, if our lunchroom is mixed: what's the advantage of your contract you're working under, what are the benefits you're getting and I'm getting, and what are the differences? But we're usually different trades, so it's a little bit apples to oranges.

Q: What would be the advantage for a non-union contractor?

RS: It's a different pay rate, it's a different benefit package. I don't know of any non-union companies that have pension. They do sometimes have benefits and they sometimes have RSPs as well, but total package, I think our number is higher no matter what. Hourly wage though, there might be some difference. When I was starting out, we were head and shoulders above a non-union electrical contractor. When I first started working at the U of A, depending what floor you were on. . . Our controls company was doing all of the floors and there were two different electrical contractors, depending what floor you were on. One was the company I'm working for now and one was a non-union company. Just chatting with a few of the people working for that company, I was making as a second year more than a third year apprentice was making there. When they heard that they were like, wow we might need to go sign up with the union. That's a big hourly wage difference, and not even looking into benefits, pension, and extra training and stuff.

Q: What about safety issues?

RS: Safety issues, it could be the same or it could be different. The general contractor usually is the one that sets the basic site rules, so it maybe doesn't matter, you're still going to have to adhere to those rules. Your specific company may have different particular rules as well, where they expect you to work longer hours until you're too tired. And you don't have the union backup to say, no I'm done, this is the amount of work I've agreed to. When you've been on a job that says five eights and they want to change your job to be six tens, so six days a week ten hour shifts, if you've been on a job through the union and they want to do that, they are supposed to give you the opportunity of a layoff in case you don't want to work that much, because you didn't agree to it in the first place. I don't think that's remotely anything they've heard of in the non-union world. Maybe they have special agreements with people where they

said, no this is all I work because I have a family and I need to get home to them or I have daycare. I know a few people who worked non-union, and they worked around that. Their childcare doesn't open until 7, so they're allowed to start at 7:30 when they have their child. Some places will make allowances no matter what. But the advantage of the union is, well this is the contract, so you can hold them to that. If you really don't want to work that, they give you an opportunity. But right now because there isn't so many jobs, and there's more electricians, if they say you need to work this extra, then you're likely going to do it. You're not going to request a layoff or bring out that rule, because you still need your job right now.

Q: Who makes the safety calls on a jobsite? Is it the foreman?

RS: For any dangerous situation, really anybody has a right to refuse and say, this is dangerous and you should stop. More likely, the responsibility falls on the supervising electrician to make that call. They're the ones who have the experience to decide, should we be doing this, should we make a new procedure, or should we contact the foreman before we proceed any further? Quite often we have to check in with the general contractor for a particular thing, just like to update the rules. With the LRT job, I have to call the LRT control centre if I'm doing particular things, if I'm going to turn off something like an escalator because we're working in front of it. If I have to unplug a security camera, I need to phone them and let them know. Any kind of thing that may be a safety issue, they can make a call too if they've gone over the speakers and said, people working on the lighting down there, please phone us. I go upstairs and phone them, because there's no phone reception down there. They might say, for what you're doing we noticed there's only one person holding the ladder, and we have a safety protocol saying two people need to be holding that ladder. I'm like, oh okay, that wasn't the procedure we were told. So we go down and we've stopped work because they told us that, and then we continue. Anybody really who knows something is wrong can say something. An indefinite shutdown, like a safety shutdown, would probably take somebody higher like a superintendent or the general contractor. Sometimes it's a tenant in the building as well that will make a complaint that maybe we're disturbing something with a certain level of noise, and we've had shutdown. We've had jobs where, if we're working in a hospital environment, we need to have negative air pressure so that dust in our site doesn't get into the hospital zone. We've had it where someone came up

and said, everybody just stop working, there isn't negative air pressure, we're worried about dust moving. So everybody just has to stop until we confirm that it's safe and we're not spreading dust and affecting patient care. There's a lot of people who can cause any kind of safety stand-down. If there's any kind of injury onsite, that's major and everybody might have to stop working until we figure out what caused that and make sure that nobody else was going to be in the same danger. Anybody could make that call if you see something going on. Or if you hear word of another crew that's had an incident, you might all have to stop if you're in the area or with the same company or under the same general contractor. It doesn't happen that often; I know it just sounds like that from the explanation. It's really hard to know what situation is going to arise and maybe you'll just have to stop and make a new plan for the rest of the day if you encounter something. That's a big difference to me coming into the unionized workplace. Before that, when I was working at the juice plant, there was such pressure to keep the line going. If your station has stopped or your machine isn't functioning, then everybody else is backed up and you're holding up production, and everybody might have to stay at work later. There was a lot of situations there where safety definitely wasn't first in mind – it was production, production, production. I definitely witnessed a lot and learned a lot on that job that makes me grateful for being part of a union. I was even on the safety committee at that company, and it didn't matter. I was a first aider and I was first aiding someone who fell and was injured. Someone above me shoved me out of the way and hurt the guy worse. So that was interesting to see the difference. It's definitely more respected. That could be just the switch to the trades, as well. I never worked non-union in the trades. People are more aware of the certificates and stuff. There's a lot more procedures and training just even having an apprenticeship and working construction.

Q: How did the Sisters Committee get started?

RS: The IBEW Sisters Committee started quite a few years ago. The first I knew about it was Ken McKenzie sent me an email saying, sisters are meeting this night at our union hall; come down and join us. The last time Ken had sent me an email I got to go lobby the Alberta government, and it was a great experience and I learned a lot. I was like, okay this guy knows what he's talking about, I'm going to go check this out and go meet some union members. That was such



an eye-opening experience, even in the labour movement, to join up. Ken would be there every time we had our meeting. He'd be letting us into the hall and he'd always have a little thing he wanted to show us or tell us about that was going on. One of the first things that had the biggest impact on us was when he started talking about the Dandelions and that whole movement. At the time, I'd never heard anything about it. It was really eye-opening to hear about somebody who was on the ground and part of that movement and tell that story of the rank and file members and what they did in the downturn in the economy in the '80s. Basically, that's what we've been facing over the last few years, so I've really taken his lessons to heart on becoming involved and championing your union and lobbying government.

Q: Why is it important for unions to be politically involved and lobby government?

RS: Why is being involved politically important for unions? Because that can dictate who's working and who's not, who's winning the jobs. Something we're running into a lot is double breasting is allowed in Alberta. That was a government decision to allow that.

Q: What does that mean?

RS: It's basically a company, if they already have a contract with the union, negotiated benefits and wages laid out, and they decide they want to hire people for cheaper, they can just open a second company under a slightly different name and they can decide to be non-union and not give out the same benefits. They can say, well now we're going to pay \$10 an hour less, or whatever they want. Maybe there isn't as much work in the union one, so people are kind of forced to go and work for a lesser wage because of that. The strength of a union is being able to have some bargaining power to say, if you need workers, we're providing them, and this is what we expect for bringing our skills to the table. We need certain pay per hour, we need a certain amount of rest for hours worked, we need a certain amounts of breaks throughout the day, and either a weekend or a certain amount of time off, depending on the job, and benefits or pension. Our bargaining power is completely lost when a company can just decide to offer the same job for less, and you don't have an opportunity to go anywhere else.

Q: Can the union oppose that?

RS: Well there's also even companies that both their companies bid on a job, so their non-union company is bidding against their union company for the electrical work on the site. If they're paying their workers less, their whole bid can be less, so that portion of the company is going to get the job.

Q: Do they put in two bids?

RS: They can, because they're two different companies even if they're owned by the same people. It just gets around allowing the workers to bargain and choose, because they don't have the opportunity anymore. If we're on an organizing drive and I go and apply at a non-union company and go there and get to know people, it's like, if we decide to join a union we can get benefits. Right now we don't have any benefits and we don't have any opportunity to take training courses. If we all want to sign up with IBEW, we could get those things. Depending on what the labour laws are at the time, right now we're still hanging onto automatic certification at I believe 65 percent. I should've looked it up before I came. I should know this, but I'm getting nervous. If you have a certain percentage of the people already signed up, union has their card signed that they want to be members, automatically that company becomes union and they have to abide by the collective agreement already bargained for. Automatically if that many people agree that are working for that company, you get that raise and benefits and the company has to abide by that. But because double-breasting is allowed and it's legal, the same day you do all that – you don't even need a vote if you have a certain amount – they can go, okay well I guess there's no more work for this company. We're now called ABC and we're doing the same work; you can come back and work for less tomorrow. That's basically what happened in the '80s that the Dandelions were fighting against. All the companies that had contracts with unions were closing down saying, come back tomorrow for half your wage if you still want a job. There were so many people for so few jobs that people were just desperate and willing to take less just to keep food on the table. That sets us all back. When I started in the trade, unions were pushing the wage up for everybody. They needed so many people, but we were paying \$44 an hour for journeyman in commercial. Non-union was \$40. Well anybody who could is

going to make that \$44, they're going to pick the better opportunity and it's going to be harder for them to hire people. They see that, we need to get people, we need to get this job done, and we can't interest enough people in working here. Well we've got to get a little closer to the union wage; we're going to have to offer \$42 and maybe people will be interested in working for that. Or more overtime. Some people would be intrigued by the fact, oh okay, I have to work every Saturday, and I get to put that overtime money in the bank, or I get to bank those hours. That's often what I hear the difference used to be back then. People would be working more hours but they wouldn't get that time and a half that we're guaranteed with our contract, and they would bank that overtime and then have time off. So it depends what you're motivated by, which company you'd work for. Depending on how many people are available to do the job, that motivates the company to want to pay more or less. Right now there's such an overabundance of electricians, they can drop the wage and there's still going to be people fighting for that job right now. We're not in a good position, unfortunately.

Q: What was it like when you went to your first Sisters Committee meeting?

RS: The first sisters meeting for IBEW was really interesting. I hadn't met any of those sisters before. We had 13 people show up, which for a committee is a pretty good turnout. That doesn't happen very often. That's quite a lot of people showing up after work hours on their own time. It was friendly and we were laughing and having a good time. It was the first time I really went to something at the union hall that was kind of a social gathering, getting to know other people, just being a little bit more involved in the union. So that was exciting and interesting in itself. We all got to become good friends. I still talk to almost all of those women quite often, even though I don't think I've worked with any of them on a jobsite.

Q: What were the issues that brought you together?

RS: For the first little bit, I don't know that we addressed any particular issues. Mostly it was like, where are you working, what jobs are hiring people right now, and that kind of stuff. It was quite a long time ago; I'm trying to think. Some of the first things we did, we did some lighting work for a festival. We were kind of organizing around that. A couple of us had to go together

and check out where everything was going to be set up, and plan that out. I ended up somehow kind of being in charge of that, just because I showed up. That's how that works. The first day I think I was the only one there or something, so for a little bit, just because I knew what was going on and I kind of started to get to know the person we were dealing with. It was actually supposed to be somebody else but they didn't end up making it, and I was there and into the fire – now you're dealing with it, kind of thing. That was really community building. Some brothers came and helped us out on that as well. A lot of the sisters are actually married to brothers in our hall as well, so it was good community building that way. Lots of people came out, different people. We don't try to exclude anybody – if somebody wants to come join us, come on out. A lot of people were like, oh you're trying to separate the women and have something special. Really it's not, it's about bringing people together. It's a meeting point to say, hey, sisters come out and join us, and what we do from there it doesn't matter. It's still community, it's still building. Since I've become co-chair we actually do a lot of stuff with The Next Generation Committee, which is meant to be young workers under 35. I've gotten to be good friends with the co-chair of that committee, so we plan things like we're all going to go to the virtual reality game centre that a couple of members own and have a fun night. Sometimes it's social stuff, just getting to know each other and having fun. Sometimes it's we're going to volunteer at this place or we're going to do a blood donation drive in conjunction with The Next Generation Committee.

Q: Is it Edmonton based, or related to other IBEW chapters?

RS: It's kind of both. Our meetings that I'm the co-chair of, it's an Edmonton-based committee. There are sisters in Calgary and wherever, and we do try to go meet up with them. We sometimes go on vacations down to Calgary and meet up with other sisters there. There's a lot less sisters in the southern part of the province, so they don't have a committee that meets regularly. But they do get together and have social events every once in a while; their chair has been working on that. We also try to connect across the country as well. Every second year there's a Canadian IBEW women's conference. Well there's only been one. I did have the opportunity to go last time and meet sisters across the country, and then there's also sisters from the international that came up and helped put that on, the international reps as well. We

also try to join with the Women Build the Nation Conference in the States, and that's women coming from all over the world. It's the biggest tradeswomen conference. So you can go to that and connect with IBEW sisters from anywhere that have showed up. I've had the opportunity to meet so many different sisters in the trades that way. It's a super great way to connect. There's also Facebook groups with different categories. There are different ones that are specifically IBEW sisters in Canada or IBEW sisters anywhere. There's also ones that are just tradeswomen, and you can post on there about anything to do with any trade, anything you want to talk about. People from all over the world can connect and answer your question or support you. Or sometimes people just post; I did this today and it was great. I built this particular thing that I'd never done before. Then everyone's saying, oh that's really cool, I've done this. You get to know people all over the world that are doing similar things to you. So we connect with everybody we can. That's also part of Build Together as well, it's connecting with the other unions that are local. And there used to be a national Build Together so it was across Canada as well. I had the opportunity to meet a couple different electricians – there's one in B.C. and one in Nova Scotia that I was able to connect with through the Build Together framework as well.

Q: What is Build Together, and how did you get involved?

RS: Build Together is a committee that is made up of all the different building trades affiliates. Each building trade affiliate is allowed to send one representative to the committee. We just work towards building our union community, working towards a more respectful workplace, and also trying to encourage workers to choose the skilled trades for their careers. We often talk to a lot of youth and try to encourage them to join.

Q: Is it an organization specific to IBEW?

RS: Build Together is part of the Building Trades of Alberta. It's Canada-wide but not every province has a chapter. It actually came from a different group that was separate, just led by a woman who wanted to encourage people to join the skilled trades, then it spread throughout the country. I actually tried to sign up for that originally, and at the time they had a lot of electricians across the country. They said, well we don't really have anybody in Alberta yet, but

we have a lot of Electricians so we'll keep you in mind when we're going to expand. Next thing I knew, Ken McKenzie from IBEW sent me an email saying, we're going to have an Alberta chapter of Build Together. There was a little bit of a promotional video. I watched it, and it was the women I'd seen from this other organization. I recognized them and thought, this is great what they're doing – promoting the trades and representing their specific trade as a great career goal. I just thought, this is great, I want to be involved. So I wrote back and told him I was interested and how I'd kind of seen the beginnings of it before when it was a different organization and I kind of knew what it was about. He wrote me back within a couple of hours and said, well you're the representative. I was like, whoa, already? I got picked already, wow that's great. I was pretty excited. At that point, I was a committee member on the Sisters Committee and I was going to the Political Action Committee as well that Ken used to chair. So I was pretty excited for this opportunity. It seemed like a big deal to get involved on the ground floor when that committee was just starting. I've been there ever since. It's just been such a great opportunity to connect with all the different trades and work towards a common goal and learn how different unions in my province deal with different issues and how they're trying to grow. I just really enjoy that we get opportunities to interact with young people and teach them about skilled trades as well.

Q: What happened when you got into a meeting with women from all different trades? Were there some similarities in experience?

RS: When we first got together as Build Together, our original mandate was they just wanted to see more women in the trades. They were like, you guys get together and figure out how to make that happen. We were all like, okay, that's pretty broad. One sister brought up right away, well there isn't really much point of saying, hey everybody, come join this career, if we're not going to keep the people that are here. So we decided to expand into the issue of retaining people as well. We need to make the work environment a good work environment so that everybody wanted to stay in the trades. That's something that's quite common as well. Even if there is a lot of women starting in the trades, they leave for various reasons. That doesn't seem to be just particular to any trade, it's an issue throughout the trades. Often when women become pregnant it's more difficult to keep your job. It depends what trade you are and what

company you are. It's a different situation no matter where you are, so trying to look at the issue industry-wide is quite difficult as well. There's certain companies or trades where it's pretty easy to get some kind of accommodation if you're not able to do your full duties. Some jobs you can work until the day before you have your baby. It's hard to know what's going to work for someone and not someone else. And everybody is different, as well. So from there we kind of expanded into just a general respect in the workplace. We kind of thought, we need to make things better for literally everyone. Everything we try to do, we want it to be universal, we want it to help everyone. I think we've succeeded in that. We don't just focus on talking to young women in schools – we'll just go and talk to all the students and get them interested in the trades. It doesn't matter, that's going to make our industry better, having people who are excited about this job and want to be here. At some point it's not going to matter as much. That's what's going to be the tipping point, is when nobody thinks about it as being a male dominated job, when everybody's just like, it's a job – I'm going to go be a plumber or electrician, and it doesn't matter who I am. This is something that's an opportunity for anybody to learn a skill.

Q: What did your parents think about you pursuing a trade instead of the university route?

RS: When I first decided to join the trades and I told my parents, I don't think they had a particular opinion too much at first. My mom was very focused on higher education and going to university when I was in high school; she talked about it a lot. But I just knew it wasn't for me, it wasn't what I wanted to do. I didn't want to sit in a classroom. I like to learn things, but I like to be hands on and figuring things out myself and not just listening all the time. She was a little bit worried too about safety aspects and that kind of stuff. My dad was actually really excited. He actually took electrical engineering, so he was excited to hear that I was going to be an electrician. The really surprising thing I had no idea about, I was telling my grandfather on my mother's side. He just asked me one day, oh how's work at the post office? I said, well I decided to become an electrical apprentice and that's what I'm doing now. He was like, oh my gosh, that's the worst job ever. I was kind of shocked. My grandfather had never said anything negative to me in my life before that. He was always so positive and encouraging. So I was shocked. Well why do you think that's the worst job? It was that he used to go and help his dad

at work for years, and his dad would give him all the terrible jobs – crawl into this attic and haul this heavy thing over there. He never progressed past first year apprentice but he would go help his dad, who was a master electrician for years. He said, wait right here. He went and brought out a certificate – my great grandfather was an IBEW member. I had no idea when I decided to do that that there was that family history.

Q: It was in the genes.

RS: It might be in the genes, it might be I was born to do this. So he brought out the certificate, his retirement certificate. He had a 40 year member pin, so that's pretty cool. When my grandfather passed away, that's one of the things I got from him, plus a lot of tools and old electrical parts from the basement. He was a hoarder and so am I, so I'll stack them up in my house for 40 more years. Right around the same time, my younger cousin decided to be an electrician too. So there's a lot of family history that I didn't even realize was there. I didn't even realize that my dad had taken electrical engineering or know that my grandfather had worked as an apprentice or my great grandfather was a master electrician and worked out of the hall for years and years. Really cool to find out, and kind of surprising.

Q: Sounds like you're proud to be an electrician.

RS: I kind of am, yes. . . . Yea, I'm pretty proud of the skills I've acquired over the years and how much I've grown because of it too. It's pretty amazing to suddenly have that change of where people are calling you and they need help, and you're able to help them. That is such a good feeling to have practical skills. I was always interested in fixing things and figuring things out, and it's just like a natural progression and you're able to learn even more. Now I'm so stubborn that if anything breaks in my house, I figure it out and fix it myself. I'm tearing the bathroom apart and redoing all the plumbing. I'm talking to my mom and she's, what are you doing today? Oh I ripped my bathroom out and I'm doing this. You're not a plumber, why are you doing that? But it's very similar, and once you know what you don't know, you can ask your plumber friends or you can research. There's definitely value in having a ticket and knowing the proper way to do things. I'm sure it takes me way longer to do my plumbing than if a plumber came and did it. But



I kind of enjoy the figuring out and the learning. If anything goes wrong with anything in my house, I like to learn how to fix it and what the problem is. Maybe sometimes I call somebody I know, like I did get a plumber buddy come and put some shutoff taps so I could do some work. I didn't really want to do the soldering myself, so he did all that for me. Then I can do whatever I want after that.

Q: Besides pregnancy, what are some of the retention barriers your committee identified?

RS: Sometimes you get on site and people think you don't belong there, and you're first on the layoff list. I definitely have heard of that. It's hard to know if maybe the company putting out the job call were looking for a particular person that they knew already, and that's what happened. Or was it something you did? Automatically I think when you're a female in the trades you assume that's what it is right away, even if it's not. Often nobody tells you what the problem is. I think sometimes just even getting your foot in the door, if you don't quite look the part or something or you're smaller. My cousin definitely is even smaller than me. She was starting out as an electrician's helper and she was hoping to get her blue book and get a real apprenticeship started. Where she was working, there was opportunities every once in a while to get your blue book. She would apply every time there was an opportunity, and she kept not being chosen. It happened quite a few times. I remember talking to her. I was still a first year at that time and I didn't know very much. I thought about it for a bit and I said, well did they tell you why they're not picking you? What's the reason? You're not going to be able to progress if no one tells you what you're doing wrong. That's a big barrier in the trades for anybody – they often don't tell you what the problem is, because nobody wants to offend anyone or something. I don't even know why it is, or people just aren't good at communicating. So she went and asked, and they paid her to go to a training course, and then they picked her the next time. So that worked out for any skills that maybe she was lacking or something like that. We always assume that, okay it's because I'm a girl or I'm small or they think I'm not strong enough. For a little bit she didn't have a car, and it's important to be able to get to a site anywhere, so that's sometimes a barrier for people. For women specifically, I've heard of lots of women who send out resumes everywhere but they don't get a call back. They change their name to a more masculine version of it – like say if their name is Christie then suddenly they're Chris – and immediately they get

calls back with the same resume and the same skills. Why companies do that, I don't know. I don't know what's the barrier there. Some companies don't care, they just want a good worker. You show up and do your work, and it's irrelevant to them. I think that's a big part of why I am where I am, and which crew I'm on. My superintendent doesn't care. Show up and work, that's great with him. We've had upwards of seven women on our crew, and I think right now we have six. There's four of us on our site and there's only two men, so that's pretty uncommon I would say. I don't know if that happens anywhere else, but it's really just he doesn't care – you show up and do your work. Really that's how it should be everywhere.

Q: Could you explain the name and the capital letters in Together, how it's often written To Get Her?

RS: That's a bit of a play on words. I don't know if we intentionally did it that way or if it's trademarked that way. I think there was definitely some thought behind creating that. We didn't coin that title in Alberta, that came from the national level. The national team had that name already, so it was just passed on to us, and we're just the Alberta section. I don't even know if ours is written that way.

Q: Yes it is – it's on your hat.

RS: Oh okay. Different promotional items were ordered by different people and designed different ways. That particular set has even an email address we don't have on it. It's just who ordered it and who planned it, and it's been different people over time. Sometimes it's that way. I've never super emphasized that. I have one of the T-shirts from years ago that's a trade specific Build Together one, so the HER part of Build Together is all done in lightbulbs, a bunch of little lightbulbs. So it really emphasizes the her, whereas different versions of that shirt, the HER is a different colour. So it depends what year. Some of them do have that where it's really spelled out as three different words, then some of them it's all lowercase letters. So I don't know if there's a good answer to that. But there's definitely a thought behind To Get Her I guess.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say about Build Together?

RS: I do have something, actually. I think for some of the really great things that come out of Build Together or even just being part of a Sisters Committee is part of the community that we build, and there's been some really surprising things that have come out of that – the full circle of things. This spring there was a brand new apprentice that was kind of having some struggles. I had three different friends contact me and say, can you help this person out, can you talk to them? They're having a bit of a rough time; they're just getting started. I eventually got in contact with her and started chatting with her, getting to know her and figuring out what we could do to help her, and just be another person to talk to. I don't think that I solved their problem at all, but it was just like a new connection, another person in the community. As we got to know one another, she started to join the Sisters Committee. We went out to do a fun run for mental health awareness to raise funds, so we got to know each other a little bit better. She asked how I knew a particular person that had connected us. She said, oh was it through this person? I said, no it was through LEAF that I met this person. She said, oh I know about LEAF, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund, I've been to a few of their events. I said, oh well I'm always there and the person greeting people at the door – maybe we met there. She was like, yea I was kind of thinking you were familiar. We started talking about different events that they'd held and different things that we'd done, and we figured out which one she went to. She'd gone to the Persons Day Breakfast two or three years ago, which we do every year in honour of when women became persons in 1929 on October 18<sup>th</sup>. Usually it's an informational thing where you learn something new. It's a breakfast to raise funds for everything we do throughout the year. Usually I'm greeting people, so I thought, oh maybe I met you at the door and helped you find your way, or something like that. She said, no that breakfast I went to, a friend took me. Before, I was a librarian and kind of felt stuck in my career and I needed a change and was feeling like I needed some direction. A friend brought me along to that breakfast, and someone there spoke about being an electrician, and made me want to be an electrician. I was like, that was me. I won an award that year and I got to speak about my job and why I picked it, and that made her choose a career and eventually end up running into me and knowing all these common people. That was really cool. At the time, I was so nervous about speaking in front of all these people. The crowd was lawyers and people working in offices downtown that are able to go to that event, because most tradespeople are already working at

that point. Speaking to that crowd I'm like, how am I going to say anything that they're going to relate to about what I've done and the volunteering I've done and why I'm encouraging girls to consider the trades as a future career? I just said, I'm just going to speak my truth and see how it goes kind of thing. It's so amazing for something that I didn't expect to reach anybody, to have that impact on somebody's life. It was really cool to find that out, that I changed somebody's decision about what they were going to do in their career. I was just like, holy crap.

Q: What's going on in that photo?

RS: There's a photo of me in asbestos gear in an asbestos removal zone. The suit is huge. During the training I'd asked, will there be small sizes available of the Tyvek suits you have to wear to keep the asbestos from getting on our clothes? They said, no there's only one size. So day comes, gotta put it on, and it's gigantic. I can't move my legs properly, I can't climb the scaffolding. It's basically *one size fits no one*.

Q: Is that a safety issue?

RS: It's a safety issue for sure. How we worked around it is I got my apprentices to use some electrical tape and they made a big bunny tail for me at first, so that would just tighten it up a little bit so I could be able to move my legs enough to get up the scaffolding. We have to wear them for three or four days, so eventually we learned to just do spikes all down my back all taped up with electrical tape so it would feel a bit better. I also had a lot of issues with masks fitting. I had fit tests for that, because my face is small but my nose and chin are not in a good proportion that one size will fit really well. I ended up having to try three or four different masks before I found one that would pass.

Q: Are there safety boots?

RS: There's lots of safety boots, a lot more selection than even when I started. It's expanded a lot. I remember when I was first hunting for composite toe boots, which are a little bit lighter and they're not electrically connective, so they're perfect for electricians – even finding that at

first was quite difficult. But now it's quite common to find them in the smaller sizes and more options. Depending what store you go to, sometimes they've all got pink on them or something. But definitely the selection has expanded with the demand.

Q: What about gloves?

RS: Gloves always takes a bit of hunting around. I've been quite lucky, the superintendents are quite good at hunting for gloves that are small enough. You need different gloves for different jobs. If you're doing a wire pull or you're working with fish tape, sometimes you want leather gloves just to protect your hands a little more. If you're doing work with knives, some sites you need a Kevlar glove, and that's harder to find one that fits really well so you can work with smaller pieces. Sometimes there's very small parts that your fingers have to fit in, and it's hard to get a glove that fits well enough that you won't drop all the pieces all the time. Our company is pretty relaxed where if they don't provide something that fits well, I'm allowed to just go buy whatever I want that makes me comfortable and that I like better. There are some sites where you have to wear the hardhat they give you – they want everyone to have a specific colour and shape to identify as that company. That's another thing I really like [*working in*] [RS] commercial, I can choose to wear a welder's hat. I'm not a welder at all, it's just the one that's lightest and most comfortable for me. Safety glasses, I've never gotten a pair at any site that is small enough and fits well and isn't hitting the back of my hardhat when I put them on. I'm always hunting for the perfect pair of safety glasses that fits exactly and doesn't fog up.

Q: Can you talk about International Women's Day in that photo?

RS: On International Women's Day this year I just happened to be working on a crew with my foreman, this woman. We actually had two apprentices working with us in a small elevator room where we were installing escalator disconnects for the project we were working on. That was pretty exciting. We've all been on the same crew for quite a long time, but all working together on the same little piece of the project doesn't happen very often. It was pretty exciting, and on International Women's Day. There would've been a fifth, but she was on vacation.

Q: How big was the crew?

RS: At that time, less than ten people. Right now on site we have six people on site, four women. We're outnumbering them right now. It doesn't happen very often. It's fun.

[ END ]